

209
2196n

New Lays of Ind

— — —
ALEPH RE



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY





THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

New Lays of Ind

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF AN INDIAN
CIVILIAN

BY
ALEPH RÉ

London :
THOMAS BURLEIGH, 376 & 377, STRAND
1903.



BARNICOTT AND PEARCE
PRINTERS

PR
5204
R2196 m

PREFACE.

THESE random reminiscences I have thrown together are of events that either happened to me personally or within my own knowledge, and can be vouched for as actual occurrences. Even the circumstances of the Lay of the Maid Widow were proved by evidence in a case brought to trial before a Criminal Court. It is pleasant in the eve of life to recall events that bring back to one's memory the days of one's joyous youth, and in the hope that some of them may serve to amuse others and give a glimpse of life in India, I venture to lay them before the public, dedicating them to the memory of those old friends who shared them with me and have gone before.

INDEX.

THE KUNBI'S BRIDE	1
THE LAY OF THE ASH-EATING FAKIR	7
THE LITTLE ONE'S GRAVE	11
THE EXILE'S CHRISTMAS	12
THE LAY OF THE FAITHFUL DOG	13
THE LAY OF THE OLD HUNTER.	18
THE LAY OF THE COLLECTOR'S SIN	20
THE LAY OF THE HINDOO SAGE.	24
THE LAY OF THE REJECTED SUITOR	25
THE LAY OF THE MAID WIDOW	29
THE LAY OF THE ODOUR OF SANCTITY	34
THE HINDU GIRL'S LOVE SONG	37
THE LAY OF THE CAPTURED CAPTAIN	39
THE HINDOO WIDOWED MAID'S APPEAL	43
THE LAY OF THE SURAT PANTHER	45
THE LAY OF THE BONES	52
THE LAY OF THE PIRANA PANTHER	59
THE LAY OF THE FANCIED VIOLET	64
THE LAY OF THE TIGER	65
THE CHIEF'S HOUR OF DOUBT	67
THE LEGEND OF BROACH	69
THE LAY OF DELHI	77
THE HAPPY KUNBIS	80
THE REQUIEM OF THE YEAR	81
FRESH TO FRESH AND NEW TO NEW	83
THE LAY OF RUINED BOMBAY	84
THE LAY OF THE AIDE DE CAMP	87
THE LAY OF THE SISTER	94

New Lays of Ind.

THE KUNBI'S BRIDE.

RÁMLI was Bápu's faithful wife ;
He had no sad domestic strife,
For did she not at early morn
Arise to grind the household's corn,
And did she not with anxious care
For fuel cow-dung cakes prepare,
Keeping besides sufficient store
Wherewith to smooth the household floor ?
And could she not with nicety
Prepare her husband's *khichree*,¹
And mix with it the *quantum suff*,
Of salt to flavour it enough ?
But time, though sweet, is swift of flight,
And may bring joy or woe ;
One cannot reckon on a night,
Or on a day, you know,

1. Split peas boiled with rice—a favourite dish.

And cholera's fell scourge one day
 Took faithful Rámli's life away.
 When this event had come to pass,
 Bápu was stunned, for who, alas !
 Would cook his food, who wash his coat,
 Or take to graze the cow and goat ?
 Like her, *chupattis*² who could pat,
 Turning them out so round and flat ?
 Who dinner to the well would bring,
 And in the morning blithely sing,
 Grinding the corn while he might snooze,
 To rise and smoke as he might choose ?
 Who, as he bathed outside the door,
 Hot water down his back would pour,
 And with her gentle kindly hand
 To rub him down would come and stand ?
 Alas ! to grieve 'twas now too late ;
 He had her body to cremate.
 The cow-dung cakes that she had made
 Were used to speed the parting shade,
 To bear her to the upper air,
 To be absorbed in *Indra*³ there.
 The neighbour Kúnbis swarmed around
 To bear her to the burning ground.

2. Flat round cakes of flour, toasted on an iron grid.
3. The Hindu idea of eternal bliss.

"*Rám bolo-o*" when Bápú cried,
The Kúnbis "*Bhai, Rám*"⁴ all replied.
With naked shoulders and bare head
Bápu the sad procession led,
Whilst helpless Rámli in the rear
Was carried on her homely bier.
Bareheaded also, Kúnbis four
Quickly their lifeless burden bore,
In Bápú's hand the ready fire
To set alight the funeral pyre.
Then, as the work of burning sped,
The thought would enter Bápú's head,
Though he had lost a faithful wife,
He could not lead a lonely life,
And he had much on hand to do
To find and marry Number Two.
The Leva Kúnbis have a way
Of wedding on one single day
In but a dozen years, and he
Who on that day would married be,
Must ready be, ere 'tis too late,
With her he's chosen for his mate :
If not, for twelve years must he stay
In hope of that one wedding day.

4. The funeral cry "*Call on Rám,*" and its answer in chorus
"*Brother, Rám !*"

It happened so that that twelfth year
 When Ràmli died was drawing near,
 And Bápú had no time to spare
 Another partner to prepare.
 'Twere hard, it could not be denied,
 Thus to await a second bride.
 He ran the country round to see
 A match for him who there might be,
 But wildly as his hopes might run
 He could not think of any one.
 At last, to desperation brought,
 Advice of Parbhudass he sought.
 Parbhu, the ready-witted, said :
 " My wife will soon be brought to bed,
 And if the child a girl should be
 'Twill be the very thing for me.
 You for a dowry need not care,
 For you have wealth enough to spare.
 I'm a poor *Pátidár*,⁵ and you
 Are but a Kúnbi. That will do ;
 I give no dowry, you instead
 Into a high-born house will wed.
 Is it a bargain ! " " Yes," he said.
 The bargain struck, his mind at rest,
 Hoped Bápú, trusting, for the best.

5. A superior Kúnbi, one of the aristocracy of the caste.

Two little girls, their mother's pride,
Fed from their mother's breast, had died,
And Parbhu's wife an oath had sworn
That should another girl be born
And death again its prey require,
Gladly would she herself expire.

And Parbhu knew her dire intent,
And that the threat was fully meant.

So when the good news reached her ear,
Rolled down her cheek the happy tear,
And as her heart with gladness throbbed,
"Oh joy, my child is saved," she sobbed.

Soon Bápú knew from glances cast,
As people sniggering by him passed,
That something must have gone astray,
And found to Parbhu's house his way.

There Parbhu met him at the door,
To mar his budding joy :

"I'm very sorry, Bápú, but
The infant is a boy."

"O dear, O dear ! What shall I do ?"
The luckless Bápú cried :

"Never despair ! I have a plan,"
Parbhu the sly replied.

"I know a Kúnbi girl just now,
From home who's run away :

They'd have her wed an old, old man,

And so she would not stay.

A fine young girl, of thirteen years,
The very thing for you.

The wedding day is close at hand :
Will that not, Bápú, do ? ”

Bápú agreed, but Parbhu said
A Kúmbi girl could never wed

Without some ornaments to deck
Her bridal toes and nose and neck.

Bápú resolved to cut a dash
And handed out the needful cash,

Which Parbhu, on his plan intent,
Took, and to Koli Rámá went.

This worthy had a boy, whom they
Produced upon the wedding day,

Dressed as a bride in garments gay.
With him the nuptial knot was tied,

And Bápú parted with his bride,
Content the usual time to wait

Ere he took home his youthful mate.
It was not long ere came the day

When Bápú had his rent to pay,
And, as a careful Kúmbi must

Part with his corn to raise the dust.
Hard by a village tank he passed :

Some urchins basking lay,
And in and out, the mud about,

Threw water in their play.
He turned him round, and clearly saw
A face he thought he'd seen.
“Now where on earth,” was Bápú's thought,
“Can I that face have seen?”
Another look! The truth then flashed,
As lightning through the air:
Oh horror! fright! That naked boy!
His Kúnbi bride was there!
He cuffed him well,—himself he laid
Open to Civil action,—
But got from Parbhu and the boy
No further satisfaction.

THE LAY OF THE ASH-EATING FAKÍR.

ONCE in a town in Gujarát,
A longish name it had,
(The Natives said its name was good,
It ended in “*abad*.”)

There, bent upon his evening ride,
A Magistrate went forth;
His course lay by the Delhi gate,
A gate that pointed North.

There 'midst the ruined shrines of old,
And mosques of ancient splendour,
Squatted with those who sold *kabábs*¹
The *pán-sopári*² vendor.

'Neath cupolas of lordly curve,
And arch and fretted aisle,
(No fairer ancient Greece could boast),
Sat he who dwelt in oil.

Where erst a marble fountain pure
Its limpid waters poured,
A Bohra, clad in naught but drawers,
Tin pots and kettles stored.

Unmindful of the mighty dead
That calmly slept around,
Groaned camels, bellowed cows, barked dogs,
A very Babel's sound.

But night draws on : the sun has set ;
Our friend the Magistrate
Is waiting, as we chatter on,
Just by the Delhi gate.

1. Pieces of meat toasted on a wooden skewer.
2. The betelnut wrapped in a green leaf that most natives chew.

Around a sweetmeat seller's shop

He saw a curious crowd :

Some talked, some laughed, or passed the joke,

Or vented curses loud.

He brought his horse up to the crowd,

Over their heads to peer,

And saw there, lying on the ground,

A dirt-begrimed *Fakír*.³

This holy man had scanty clothes,

In fact, one could but note, he,

Though covered well with cowdung ash,

Wore only a *lungoti*.⁴

Some ashes by his side that lay,

Into his mouth he crammed ;

These with a stick fast down his throat

Apparently he rammed.

The sweetmeat seller raised his voice,

And piteously he cried :

“ Why was he forced to give an alms ?

Suppose the *Fakír* died ! ”

3. A Mussulman religious mendicant.

4. A loin-cloth.

The sin of this would fall on him,
The gaping crowd explained :
Of ash to have for alms to eat
The *Fakír*, too, complained.

The Magistrate, he raised his whip,
In place of giving alms :
In stirring up that foul *Fakír*
He felt no foolish qualms.

In *trága*⁵ dour before his face
Seeing no sportive joke, he
Bade a policeman seize his friend
And walk him off to *choki*.⁶

The *Fakír* earns his daily bread
No longer free and gratis ;
Hard labour for three months in jail
His unexpected fate is.

The holy man could see no harm
Of alms in his extortion,
And when he had to work in jail
Was grieved in due proportion.

5. Personal injury done in order to extort alms.

6. A Police lock-up.

THE LITTLE ONE'S GRAVE.

A GROUP of sympathising Christians stood
Around a new-made grave. Within was laid
A little coffin, covered all with white,
That held the body of a little child.
Near stood the clergyman, and scattered round
Were labourers of swarthy Indian hue,
Who, unconcerned, proceeded fast to close
The child's last peaceful resting place on earth.
The burial service had been read. The words
"Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust" still rang
With mournful meaning in our conscious ears.

Who clatters along with such reckless speed,
Still pressing, still urging his panting steed?
Who rudely rides up on the pathway steep
Straight on to the group who such silence keep?
Hush! hush! 'Tis the father, in sorrow wild
Who rides to the grave of his only child.
He had ridden through darkness, rain and storm
For one last fond look at that well-loved form,
But, weary and hopeless, heart-broken with woe,
He saw but the coffin that rested below.
At such a moment words of pitying grief
Were worse than useless, feeling mockery:
We left him standing by that little grave.

THE EXILE'S CHRISTMAS.

CAN this be Christmas, this hot, sultry day ?
The sun with rays of brass can hardly pierce
The haze of dust impalpable that broods
Upon the burnt-up, thirsty land, on which
For many months no genial rain may fall,
Nor ever Winter's true companion, snow,
With mantle virgin-hued earth's bosom deck.
Where are the cheerful chimes our boyhood heard
Rise in the wintry wind, and, echoing far,
In distant cadence die, as if our thoughts
To carry on beyond the short-lived hour,
Unto a time when we, like them, must pass ?
Where is the little ivy-covered church,
Where all, both young and old, both rich and poor,
The squire, the farmer, and their kith and kin,
Greeted each other with a kindly smile
On this their holy day, and carried out
The angels' greeting "To all men good will ?"
They are not here : and though, mayhap, a few,
Our friends in this our exile, gather round,
Talk of the current topics of the day,
And wear a smile of outward cheerfulness ;
When after dinner comes the exile's toast
Of "Absent Friends," then look the table round.

You'll find the hearts of all those sitting there
Turned inwards, while their thoughts are far away,
Far, far away, in that old long-lost home,
Where fathers, mothers, wives and babes, they know,
Meet happy : but one loved one's place is void.
The glass may touch the lips, the sparkling wine
Is placed untasted down, the stiffened gorge
Its wonted task refusing, as the tear
Brims up unbidden in the sternest eye,
And many a furtive hand is quickly passed
Across men's brows, as if to weep were shame.
Such is our Exile's Christmas. Speed the day
When we may turn our faces homeward way.
Welcome old England's winter fogs and show'rs,
The warmth of sunny hearts, not skies, be ours.

THE LAY OF THE FAITHFUL DOG.

ONCE on a time, ere railways ran,
When steamers, too, were rare,
One's locomotive was a cart,
Drawn by a bullock pair.

And jauntily they did their work,
With not such trifling loads,

Thirty or forty miles a night
On, O ye gods ! such roads.

Their name was aptly corduroy,
For where the soil was black
The cart-wheels, moving parallel,
Wore down and formed the track.

On sand one smoothly tooled along,
But when one came to stones,
Whack ! bang ! thump ! crash ! well off' was he,
Who rode and broke no bones.

Sometimes a *nullah* crossed the track
With banks ten feet or more ;
Lucky the wight who got across
Quite dry from shore to shore.

For privilege leave a doctor once
Gave up his draughts and pills,
Leaving behind an "acting" man
To cure the Station's ills.

He took P.L., the doctor said—
This once a pun must plague you—
Out of the Station's endless plague,
And left behind the ague.

But ere he went, it was at night,
His pistol loaded he,
For Bheels and such upon the road
That he might ready be.

Nerbudda rolled its mighty tide,
The boatmen's song was merry,
Pistol in belt, that doctor fierce
Crossed quickly in the ferry.

And when he reached the other side
His bullock coach was there ;
A carpet tied on arched bamboos
Kept out the sun and glare.

On well-stuffed grass his mattress lay,
A pillow at each side
To ease the jolts, and at his feet
His little dog he tied.

Poor faithful hound, he little knew
What fate before him lay,
Or he had stayed content at home,
Nor whined to come away.

The bullocks' tails held high in air
Proclaimed their eager zeal ;

Perhaps anticipated twist
Already they could feel.

It matters little to our tale,
Were 't zeal or fear or what :
“ *Chullo's* ”¹ the word, the bullocks move
Off at a goodly trot.

Past Deeva's myriad toddy trees,
Where Bheels delight to dwell,
And past Unklesur's dirty town
With its accustomed smell.

Outside the town the doctor breathed
A purer, fresher air.
He passed the *nullah* near and thought
His progress so far fair.

He then a mild Havanna lit,
Soother of every pang,
And would full soon have been at rest
In land of dreams, when—bang !

A blunderbuss fired through the cart
Disturbed the doctor so,
He stayed to think of nothing else,
But thought 'twas time to go.

1. Go !

He left his wee dog in the cart,
He let his pistol lie :
No thought of fighting filled his breast,
But simply where to fly.

The *nullah* he'd just crossed he thought
A goodish place to hide ;
But ere he ran, straight at the thieves
His money-bag he shied.

"It's that you want, I s'pose," he said,
And in the darkness fled,
And tumbling down the *nullah's* bank,
He pitched upon his head.

But quickly rising, on he flew :
The other bank he gained,
And tried to climb a *babool*² tree,
But pricked by thorns refrained.

Soon all was still—the robbers gone,
The doctor ventured back :
The driver and the cart were there.
Still on the corduroy track.

He whistled to his little dog,
No little dog was there ;

Beneath the cart he saw a form
Was dangling in the air.

The faithful dog his master tried
To follow as he fled,
And there beneath the cart he swung,
Hanged by the neck and dead.

O faithful dog of human cur,
Of trust deluded victim,
Those robbers had done well if thee
They'd saved and soundly kicked him !

THE LAY OF THE OLD HUNTER.

THE hunter started as he heard
That loud-tongued saddling bell :
It fired not, as of old, his blood,
But tolled his parting knell.

'Midst crowds that gaped and fluttering flags,
The races' gaudy show,
He gave one look as if to say :
" Oh master, must I go ? "

They did not see that mute appeal,
Shot from the hunter's eye,

And so old Bob must brace himself
To conquer or to die.

It was not gain that urged him on,
Nor gamester's treacherous luck :
No lottery gave his race its zest,
But simply Arab pluck.

On, on, still on ! each hedge, each ditch
He bounded as of yore,
Although he felt within himself
His racing days were o'er.

The good old horse, though at each stride
His breathing heavier grew,
With one brave bound the hurdle cleared
That brought the goal in view.

Fast ! 'Tis the end ! To urge him on
Both whip and spur were plied :
Beat by a length, the good old nag
Just passed the post,—and died !

Staunch to the last, in honour's cause
He spent his latest breath ;
No equine foe that race had gained,
Had Bob not fought with *death* !

A crowd came round his prostrate form,
The racing throng drew near :
A something glistened in each eye,—
Let's hope it was a tear.

Wh'lst in each breast some feeling moved
Of pity for the steed,
Each hoped to boast, in life's short course,
Of some such noble deed.

THE LAY OF THE COLLECTOR'S SIN.

O YE, who in the gorgeous East
Live lives of strictest virtue,
I tell a tall Collector's sin :
Its moral will not hurt you.

There are in India people queer,
Of many queer persuasions ;
Byrágí, *Gosáin*¹ and *Fakír*
One meets on all occasions.

The hair of some in massive folds
Is matted, full of vermin :

1. Hindoo religious mendicants.

Whether they ever wash or not
No fellow can determine.

The arms of some above their head
Are rigid held aloft ;
Through hands tight clenched the finger nails
Piercing the tendons soft.

A form, scarce human to behold,
Lives in the noonday sun,—
Naked, deformed, it almost looks
A living skeleton.

On timid superstitious folk
Their conscience knows no qualms
In laying heavy burdens and
Extorting grudging alms.

A dirty *Gosáin's* slippers laid
Outside a peasant's door
Will bar his way ; the abject wretch
Enters his house no more.

To fast-closed door the mendicant
Need only tie his toe ;
For fear of *Siva's*² wrath he gains
Always a pice or two.

2. One of the Hindoo Triad, Brahma, Siva and Vishnu.

Bháts, *Chárans*,³ too, their points to gain
Will brave unseemly gashes,
While *Fakírs*, wallowing on the ground,
Will stuff their mouths with ashes.

One of these gents in garb of ash
No evil did expect, or
In hopes of cash once tried his hand
On a tall, young Collector.

Ashes he wore, and but one rag,
Not satin nor prunella ;
His carcase shaded from the sun
A cotton, blue umbrella.

He gat him to the *Sáhib's* door,
And there the livelong morning
He sat in hope, the futile threats
Of *Puttewalas*⁴ scorning.

The *Sáhib* from his ride came home,
Saw how the matter lay,
Dismounted from his horse and bade
The nag be led away.

3. Two castes, who perpetrated such atrocities.
4. Belted attendants and messengers.

He went in, and came out as if
No mischief there was brewing ;
He looked as if he did not care
What the *Gosain* was doing.

But walking, still he held his hand
Suspiciously behind,
Looked down, as if some stone or thing
Upon the ground to find.

But soon the *Gosain* gave a jump,
A veritable start !
As with the slashing of a whip
He felt his body smart.

The whip came down a second time ;
He stayed no more to see,
But fled as ne'er *Gosain* before
From mortal foe did flee.

Behind him, too, in wrath pursued
That furious tall Collector,
As if with wrath of gods endued,
Of morals as corrector.

Of course, we do not mean to say
It was not very wrong

Around a *Gosain's* naked ribs
To strike and twist that thong,

But when *Gosains* and mendicants,
All decent manners scorning,
Sit at a tall Collector's door,
'Tis well to give them warning.

In the bazaar's their proper place,
Where Natives fear their curses,
And only to the needy poor
We *Sáhibs* ope our purses.

THE LAY OF THE HINDOO SAGE.

“ MY children, practise virtue ! 'Tis the noblest end
For which mankind his fleeting days on earth may
spend.

When aspirations pure with carnal sense are cloyed,
'Tis as the purest silver with base dross alloyed ;
With thoughts engrossed with earthly cares and
filthy pelf

Man cannot be absorbed in Deity itself.
This the blest end of being, that we all should
come

To nothing, but be infinite as one with *Brahm*.”

Thus spake the Hindoo sage, as 'neath a spreading
tree

He sat in freshest odour of pure sanctity.

His hair in massive knots upon his head was tied :

His shade a blue umbrella. Little else beside

His person covered save the product of the cow

In shape of ashes—Siva's trident on his brow—

The holy man in nature's dress thus sat in calm
repose,

And with his fingers sometimes blew his holy nose.

THE LAY OF THE REJECTED SUITOR.

Two friends once in their shirt-sleeves sat,

For it was sultry weather,

And prosing on in friendly chat

Smoked their cheroots together.

Beneath a mango tope hard by

The tents gleamed fair and white ;

Among the leaves the firefly's spark

Glanced in the evening light.

The horses picketed around

Chumped at their evening meal ;

Their keepers slept upon the ground,
 Wrapped up from head to heel.

The jackal, hunting in the dark,
 Gave out his howling cry :
The fox, in chorus, with his bark
 Prowled in the cotton nigh.

The Bhísti,¹ stretched beside his beast,
 Spoke with portentous snore,
Rejoiced that for one day, at least,
 His watery task was o'er.

The Puggy² and his thievish crew,
 Alert the camp to guard,
In silent watch sat two and two,
 Each with his pipe and sword.

The friends re-killed that morning's pig
 With their accustomed vigour,
Hoped, though their last day's bag was big,
 To-morrow's would be bigger.

Discussed the tiger's latest kill,
 All as it mangled lay,

1. The water carrier.

2. The watchman.

And trusted both in Bápú's skill
To track the beast next day.

But even that prolific theme,
To sportsman dear, the bag,
Must have an end, like morning dream :
Their talk began to flag.

Though these old friends for many a day
Together oft would roam,
It was but rarely, strange to say,
They ever spoke of home.

That night, however, it befel,
For want of other topics,
The younger of his home did tell,
His home not in the Tropics.

He told his friend of sister Clare,
As well as pretty Polly,
And thought, if one or both were there,
Oh ! wouldn't it be jolly ?

“ By Jove ! a thought,” he cried. “ Old friend,
My ancient chum, old Harry,
I think, if sister Clare were here,
That she and you might marry.”

Hal knew that, as in *photos* seen,
Clare was a charming creature,
And blushed so that the flush suffused
Each sun-burnt yellow feature.

He hinted at advancing years
And not too fresh complexion ;
Friend Tom derided all his fears,
And laughed at all objection.

'Tis right to say, in passing on,
That Hal was not a beauty.
Tom studied but the inward man,
A man that did his duty.

Hal's hair was red, his nose turned up,
His form was limp and lanky :
Who'd stand a tiger's charge might be,
For all Tom cared, a Yankee.

'Twas soon arranged that sister Clare
Should come out to her brother,
And Hal and she, when she arrived,
Should marry one another.

So Clare came out, from Hal's long purse
Provided with her *trousseau* :

But asked to name the wedding day,
She really could not do so.

A Bohra bought the wedding cake,
There was no service choral ;
They found they'd made a great mistake—
My story has its moral.

Descriptions fair and *photos*, too,
Are apt to be deceiving :
Take no leap in the dark, and know
That seeing is believing.

THE LAY OF THE MAID WIDOW.

RÁMCHUNDER was a Wánia,
Of Gujaráti race,
Obese as to his person he,
And oily as to face.

For he, as others of his caste,
Was fed on *khicheree*.
Which, *quantum suff*, was mingled with
Much sixteen-anna *ghee*.

He was a pattern man of those
Whom Vaishnavites they call,
One whom the smallest flea's demise
Would terribly appal.

Yet one who'd seize the very rag,
That clothed his debtor's back,
Whilst pigeons of the daintiest food
Their fill would never lack.

B flats he'd softly breathe upon
And put outside the door
The gentlest of all gentle hints
To go and bite no more.

As for F sharps, the more they hopped,
The better pleased was he ;
For who could tell his granny's soul
Amongst them might not be ?

Domestic virtues, too, were his,
As custom reckoned such ;
Rámchunder, as the story goes,
Was married very much.

One ancient dame of forty-five,
And one of thirty-one,

Had cheered his hopes, and yet alas !
Rámchunder had no son.

His spouses twain said to their lord
That this would never do,
Lest in another world he might
Its consequences rue.

If no son lit his funeral pyre,
Where did he hope to go ?
To “ *Swurg*, or Paradise ” he said,
They promptly answered, “ No ! ”

The thing, they said, lay in the shell
Of the minutest nut.
If such should be, he needs must go
Down to the lowest “ *Put*. ”¹

What should he do ? Rámchunder said,
In dire perplexity :
His spouses, with the faintest blush,
Said : “ Marry Number Three ! ”

And so 'twas done. They chose his bride
Of the mature age of nine,
Round whom they hoped in time to see
The olive branches twine.

1. The infernal regions.

Rámchunder rode upon a *tat*,²
His face besmeared with red,
With tinselled garments on his back,
And more upon his head.

His little bride him followed close,
In gilded palanquin :
Poor child ! Methought her hideous fate
Upon her face was seen.

Brahmins were fee'd and fed. Shrieked out
The fife's discordant squeal,
And tom-toms, echoing to the air,
Gave forth respondent peal.

Fast to its close the wretched scene
Drew on : the *fated tree*,³
Back from whose bourne is no return,
Was times encircled three.

Rámchunder went back to his bags,
Refreshed as giant he—
Those bags that always looked for two,
Where they gave one Rupee.

2. A pony.

3. The Túlsi tree, to go round which thrice is a part of the marriage ceremony.

He scraped, he screwed, his debtors ground
Down to the very dust :
If any said he could not pay,
The answer was—he must.

Rámchunder was to have an heir,
For so the Brahmins said ;
A promise which to gain, of course,
His bags were freely bled.

His infant bride with ripening years
Knew her impending fate ;
That thrice-encircled *Túlsi* tree
Had taught it her too late.

But in the course of time it came,
The worms Rámchunder spurned
More than the dust beneath his feet
At last the tables turned.

They cut his throat one rainy day
And set his bonds alight :
Did his almost unpitied fate
Improve his widow's plight ?

She has her hair cut short, she sweeps
Each day the household floor :

Those two old cats, the sister wives,
Sit on her more and more.

To live on with an ancient bloke
Or widowed maiden stay.—
Which of the two's the harder lot,
I'll let my readers say.

THE LAY OF THE ODOUR OF SANCTITY.

ALL ye whose noses may be sharp,
Come, listen to my lay,
About a very holy man,
A burly priest, S.J.

His cassock, girdle-bound at waist,
From neck to foot flowed free ;
He had on shoes, but these beyond
His linen none could see.

Known far and wide for deeds of good,
His deeds of charity,
His odour spread throughout the land,
Odour of sanctity.

He filled his scholar's eyes and brains
With learning that was ample,
But luckily in this alone
They followed his example.

On sanitary errand bent,
Of odours the corrector,
There came to visit once his school
H—l—t, the great Inspector.

He sniffed about, looked up and down,
His nose held high in air :
His duty's eager sense of smell
Was certainly all there.

He poked about, sniffed in and out,
His feelings who can tell ?
His nose had found, there was no doubt,
A most unpleasant smell.

The rooms were neat, the school was clean,
The boys looked smart and fresh ;
The Padre clearly did not care
To mortify the flesh.

The Padre's room was tidied up,
Not e'en his books were dusty,

But yet the atmosphere around
Most certainly was fusty.

Suspiciously the Inspector searched
Each closet, chest, and bed,
“My nose is not at fault,” said he ;
“I fear it is my head.”

He showed the Padre, from his bath
The water would not flow
Into the drain. The priest replied
Humbly : “I did not know !”

But frightened at his look of wrath,
He tried his ire to soften :
“It does not matter. In ze bath
I do not vosh so often.

“I haf been here joost *achzehn* month,
Von year and háf you call,
And it is true dat in zat time
I baze tree time in all.”

Quick H—l—t turned upon his heel
In speechless wrath and shame :
That sanctimonious odour round,
He’d found from whence it came !

THE HINDU GIRL'S LOVE-SONG.

A girlish form, in pure white arrayed,
Along Gunga's¹ bank one evening strayed.
Though dark of hue was her nut-brown skin,
A loving, true heart there beat therein,
As she cried with a plaintive wail :
 Oh Rámá, Rámá, come home to me,
 Both now and ever my lord to be ;
 With fond love and pride
 I'll live as thy bride,
Then pass through death's fire to be ever with thee.

An earthen lamp in her hand she bore,
For it had come down from the days of yore,
That, set afloat on a certain eve,
An omen of absent friends 'twould give.
To the sky rose her plaintive wail :
 Oh Rámá, Rámá, come home to me,
 Both now and ever my lord to be ;
 With fond love and pride
 I'll live as thy bride,
Then pass through death's fire to be ever with thee.

1. The Ganges.

She trimmed with a wick her tiny boat
And set it on Gunga's breast afloat :
Then eagerly watched its dwindling light
Till it floated safely out of sight.
But still she cried, as she homeward turned :
 Oh Rámá, Rámá, come home to me,
 Both now and ever my lord to be ;
 With fond love and pride
 I'll live as thy bride,
Then pass through death's fire to be ever with thee.

The omen was true, for soon to his home
Her Rámá returned, no more to roam ;
And after long life the happy pair
Both passed through fire to the upper air,
And the wish she had uttered came true :
 Oh Rámá, Rámá, come home to me,
 Both now and ever my lord to be ;
 With fond love and pride
 I'll live as thy bride,
Then pass through death's fire to be ever with thee.

THE LAY OF THE CAPTURED
CAPTAIN.

A CAPTAIN in the navy bold,
On matrimony bent,
To call upon a lady fair
In doubting fashion went.

For he was swarthy-hued and fat,
And she was fair and slim,
Whilst down each cheek there graceful drooped
Two corkscrew ringlets trim.

A bolder tar, with softer heart,
Ne'er faced a quarter-deck :
Unflinchingly he death had faced,
In battle, storm and wreck.

But in the art of female war
He was a perfect dunce,
And face to face with women's smiles
He struck his flag at once.

But now, for fear that I should seem
Long winded and a bore,

I'll take the hero of my song
Inside the lady's door.

Just then (this secret is profound),
His feelings in a twitter,
He had imbibed Dutch courage with
A little gin and bitter.

He stepped as if his foeman's ship
He boarded with his crew—
But halted when, in place of one,
He found there ladies two.

He tacked about among the chairs,
The lee side and the weather ;
You could have knocked him down, he thought,
With one blow of a feather.

He hardly knew which way to turn,
With cap and gloves he fumbled :
Just managing to shake their hands,
Over a stool he tumbled.

The words he'd learnt by heart to say
No more at his disposal,
Soon oozed from out his finger ends
His purpose of proposal.

Mamma, the elder of the two,
At match-making was clever,
And purposed, if he was to wed,
It should be now or never.

The Captain's words were very few ;
He knew not how the deuce he
Had managed, yet he was, no doubt,
Engaged to marry Lucy.

Elate at first, he thought he had
The seventh heaven scaled,
But soon at sight of wedded bliss
His oozing courage failed.

The more he thought, the more he feared :
Alas ! what could be done ?
He soon made up his mind that he
Had better cut and run.

He packed his traps so secretly
That not a soul should know,
And sent them off that very night
On board the P. and O.

He sneaked himself on board a boat
At the Apollo Bunder,

Thinking with glee, when he had gone
How Lucy dear would wonder.

His bunder-boat sailed gaily on
To catch the Homeward Mail ;
The morning breeze blew off the *Ghâts*,
And swelled the tautened sail.

“Sail on, my boat, sail on !” he cried ;
“My crew are true and staunch !”
But saw, to his dismay, behind
There steamed an ugly launch.

’Twas all in vain his sturdy crew
Pulled all, pulled well together :
The Captain knew full well he’d run
The full length of his tether.

So he was caught and taken back
To his expectant bride,
And by the parson that same day
The marriage knot was tied.

THE HINDOO WIDOWED MAID'S
APPEAL.

FROM India I heard a voice
Of plaintive moan and sound :
With more than blatant trumpet's sound
It rang the hills around.
Shrilly the melting tones rang out
In piteous accents wild,
And sobs were mingled with the tears
Of a poor Hindoo child.
" Oh sisters sweet, across the sea !
Oh mothers kind and fair !
Oh children of the ruddy cheek
And of the golden hair !
My locks are black, my skin is dark,
I live 'neath tropic skies :
Cold is your clime, yet in your hearts
Warm sympathy there lies.
I am a little widowed maid,
A drudge domestic, one
Whom all the happy in the land
As a mere outcast shun.
They broke my bangles from my arms,¹

1. The custom when a husband dies.

They shaved my pretty head,
They gave me garments coarse to wear :
They said my lord was dead.
Once, years ago, I recollect
They gave me dresses fine,
And in my flowing ebon locks
Did many a flower twine.
There, seated by a little boy,
They said I was his wife ;
Our clothes were knotted by a priest,
It seems it was for life.
Oh ! would that I that life might lose
And with his body burn,
Rather than be that loathsome thing
That all the household spurn !
Thus should I fast on heav'nly wings
Soar up to Indra's heaven :
In Paradise to serve my lord
To me it would be given.
But in your pitying British law
Ye *Sati*² will not know,
And I must be a wretched slave
In this sad earth below.
The future round me all is dark,
Nor joy nor hope I see ;

2. The immolation of a widow with her husband's body.

No husband, and no loving child,
Will ever be for me.
It is the custom of the land ;
Your learnèd people say
They cannot interfere—but where
A will is there's a way.
Oh sisters of the golden hair !
Oh matrons, wise and staid !
If but with sympathy and tears,
Help a poor widowed maid !

THE LAY OF THE SURAT PANTHER.

THERE is a town in Gujarát,
They call it Soorut or Surat,
According as their fancy may
Like modern or more ancient way.
The town, as we are always told,
Was famous from the days of old,
Where Englishmen first took their stand
And spread their Empire through the land.
Its houses mostly made of wood,
Embattled walls around it stood,
Of mighty Tapti on the bank,
A river of no little rank,

One of the prides of India,
As it rolls down from Vindhya.
Here 'tis much given at its will
To wander from its bed, and spill
Much water, so that folks in haste
Must often flee, not to their taste,
Or go upstairs lest they should drown,
As floods come pouring through the town.
There is another matter, too,
That Soorutees must often rue ;
If they are free of Taptee's flood,
So many houses are of wood,
Set one alight and you've a chance
To lead the town a pretty dance,
And, once it gets the start of you,
To burn straight off a street or two—
So to total its blessings and make a nice rhyme of it,
One might say that the Soorutees have a bad time of it,
And pray to their gods to leave them at peace
And from fire and water to give them release.
Now once, beside from fire and water,
They'd fears from quite another quarter—
This to the others did not yield—
'Twas from a wild beast of the field !
One Sunday morn, when free from work
Most decent folks were off to Kirk,
A Parsee came in consternation

And gave the Sáhibs information
A tiger 'd come where surely he
Had never any right to be ;
Had left his leafy, jungle home,
In Soorut's peopled streets to roam ;
And as the folks in terror fled
Had hidden in a wooden shed.
Hence great excitement, fierce-alarms,
People assembling in their swarms,
And bringing out all kinds of arms.
Some came, in terror for their lives,
With rusty daggers, kitchen knives :
Some, almost frightened into fits,
Had brought old spears and roasting spits.
One, eager warfare to begin,
Brandished a mighty rolling pin,
And, ere he caught the tiger's eye,
Determined he would do or die.
The Parsee said, in mortal strife
Some hundreds had been maimed for life :
As for the dead who'd die no more,
They lay in each street by the score.
Armed with a rifle or a gun,
The Sáhibs must see what could be done,
From tower to tower, from gate to gate,
Soorut would else be desolate.
Some half-a-dozen Sáhibs went out

To see what 'twould be best to do,
And in a tumble-down old shed
A panther really came to view.

Another worshipper of fire
Was there, majestic in his ire,—
Big with importance and with fuss,
He held an ancient blunderbuss ;
His valour, quite beyond control,
Shot at the panther through a hole.

This to friend *Spots* was most provoking,
And certainly beyond all joking :

So, clambering up a wooden wall,
As steep as any steeple,

He gave a jump and came a flop
Right down among the people.

Oh for the pen of some rare bard of old,
Who wars of heroes and of giants told,

To sing how Bápoo and Rámchunder
In devious ways then fell asunder.

To tell how Haridass that day,
Armed with a sword quick fled away ;

How Roostum, name unknown to fear,
Then moved strategic to the rear.

To sing how Yákùb and Mahomet,
Instead of at, both bolted from it ;

How Moslem, Parsee and Hindoo,
Turned various colours, mostly blue.

In short, how all the population
Were seized with hideous consternation,
And one and all, heels over head,
Incontinently turned and fled.

Spots, flabbergasted at the sight,
Thought that his safety lay in flight,
Of private property a scorner,
Jumped through a yard and round a corner,
And then, not halting in his race,
Came on six Englishmen in face.

Careering on, he put the six
In an uncommon nasty fix.

There were people in front,
There were people behind,
There were people around them
Of every kind,

There were people to left,
There were people to right :
They were shouting and yelling,
And screaming with fright.

Amidst all this terrible hullabaloo,

Please mention, what were those English to do ?

They could not fire to kill the brute,

For fear some Native they might shoot.

What should they do ? They would not run,

Five out of six—yet did it one.

He fled away

And sprawling lay.
The panther seized him by the calf :
The others could but stand and laugh.
The panther left the hero there,
And turned his back to flee—but where ?
The mob swarmed round on every side,—
The street was only twelve feet wide.
Where should he flee ? Oh where ? Oh where ?
He looked around him in despair.
Before a house an ancient dame
Stood : she was yet unknown to fame,
Though now enthroned in awful glory
As heroine of my panther story.
For her of misery the cup
Was full : the panther bounded up,
And, as she shrieked in wild alarm,
Pinned down and held her by the arm.
Tableau ! A cool-eyed sportsman stood,
And calmly aimed his rifle good :
True to its aim, the bullet sped,
And crash ! went through the panther's head.
Come to its end his little day,
Prone on his back the victim lay,
And as he kicked upon the ground
The valiant Parsees crowded round.
One bully (let us say the least)
Kicked, as he lay, the dying beast.

Staunch to the last, in fighting game

He spent his latest breath ;—

No Parsee bully had him kicked

But that he fought with death.

With dying gasp the plucky brute

Seized a by-stander by the foot ;

The dying grip of no avail,

The bitten man now tells the tale.

But he was held tight, willy-nilly,

And must have looked extremely silly.

But grim old Death had done his work :

The beast that well had fought

Relaxed his grip, and soon himself

Was but a thing of nought.

Like that Parsee, a dying beast,

Now, if to kick it please you,

Take care to keep beyond his reach,

Lest, dying, he should seize you.

Be calm and always stand your ground :

For when the fight's begun,

If you would save your precious hide,

The worst thing is to run.

THE LAY OF THE BONES.

COME, all good folks, forsake awhile
The world's tumultuous strife,
And listen to a little tale
Of Indian peasant life.

Now Rutton was a Kùmbi lass,
Of Kùmbi lasses pearl,
In fact, as her sweet name implied,
A Jewel of a girl.

And Parbhoodass, her bosom's lord,
A decent kind of fellow,
Though quite respectable, in age
Verged on the sere and yellow.

She fooled the old man to his bent,
And ruled, of course, the house,
And like a kitten frolicked round
That dear, sedate old mouse.

One season, as the time grew near
To pay the Sirkar's rent,

The village gossips told their tales,
As commonly they tell.

He yoked his stately bullocks two,
Of lordly hump and horn :
He tied his millet straw behind,
And in his bundle corn.

But ere he went, to Rutton said
His final, loving “tátá,”
Her he commended to greet *Rám*¹
And to the village *Mátá*².

She cracked her knuckles on his cheeks,
Put on a face of woe,
Touched with her brow his feet and shed
A briny tear or so.

Now twisted sharply as to tail
And tickled with the toe,
The well-fed bullocks trotted off
As fast as they could go.

Then Rutton went to see her friends,
And round the village well

1. A Hindu god.

2. Siva, whose temple stands outside almost every Hindu village.

With wheat old Parbhoo filled his cart.
And off to market went.

The village swains there gathered, too,
And in a harmless way
That little kitten talked and laughed,
And flirted half the day.

Beware, young lady, how you throw
Enchanting glances round,
For 'neath a dark skin, as a fair,
A tender spot is found.

The day wore on, and dewy eve
Passed into starry night :
Fair Rutton cooked her evening meal,
And trimmed her evening light.

She saw the fowls go up to roost
On their accustomed plank,
And that the cow and buffalo
Their evening water drank.

Then carefully she barred the door
And closed up every chink,
Hung up her *sàri*³ on a peg,
And lay awake to think.

3. A Hindoo woman's dress.

She thought of Parbhoo toiling on,
His bullock-cart his bed,
And of that *Koli* youth who'd put
The pitcher on her head.

The village slept its sleep of peace ;
And all was still—when, hark !
Sensation stirred the village dogs
And they began to bark.

She saw a hand that tried to feel
The door, to loose the chain,
Above, below, and round and round
It felt but all in vain.

She did not stir, she hardly breathed ;
She did not scream, because
She thought it better to lie still,
And find out who it was.

Her heart beat fast, but, self-possessed,
She felt no vain alarm,
When starlight on the roof revealed
That smart young *Koli's* form.

A moment passed, then through the air
Rang out a mighty crash :

The lintel of the door broke down,
The door itself went smash !

Then Rutton thought 'twas time to scream ;
The cock crowed loud and clear ;
Bellowed the buffalo and cow
And woke the neighbours near.

She gave the *Koli* time to bolt,
Then rent the silent air
With piercing shrieks, and rushed about
With wild, disshevelled hair.

By neighbours pacified at length,
Rutton forbore to scream,
And, questioned who the culprit was,
She thought 'twas *Koli* Bheem.

Had such a thing been ever thought
In dreams of wildest flight ?
"Revenge, revenge !" the Kùnbis cried,
And that ere close of night.

The morning broke and folks awoke,
'Twas proved by witness meet
That Kùnbis four a burden bore
All in a winding sheet.

Soon horrid whispers spread abroad,
A murder there had been,
And vultures at a certain spot
Tearing a corpse were seen.

A sharp Police Inspector came,
And information gave
That *Koli* Bheem had run away,
The murder was a shave.

A learned Magistrate at once
Saw the transparent sham :
Murder was clear and Bheem was dead,
The bolting was a flam.

“Dig up the corpse” ’Twas said ! ’Twas done !
And there among the stones,
Just where the vultures had been seen,
Were veritable bones.

A Doctor saw the bones, and said
They bullocks’ bones did seem :
The indignant Magistrate declared
One was the leg of Bheem.

Policemen, too, men good at need,
Were ready there to prove

They'd buried Bheem's corpse down below
And put a cow above.

But he was baulked. He could not send
The case for trial. Why ?
For reason good : they could not find
The *corpus delicti*.

So turning out, with smaller fry,
That sharp Police Inspector,
Himself he posed before the world
Of morals as corrector.

But time is swift, and in its flight
Brings funny things to pass,
And in its sternest cynic mood
Cried " Write this man an ass."

That of the fact no doubt should be
A clear proof it adduced,
And safe before the villagers
The dead alive produced.

The villagers of care relieved,
Rejoiced and all was gay,
Nor did the Magistrate his face
Show there for many a day.

Now Rutton's grown demure and staid :
Bheem never looks at Rutton,
For since he's safe back in his *gám*,⁴
He does not care a button.

THE LAY OF THE PIRANA PANTHER.

FOUR sportsmen, P and R, and N and C,
In search of Christmas fare,
Prepared to have a mighty shoot
Of partridge, quail and hare.

Their field was on a rolling plain,
And you may think it queer,
But in the language of the East
'Twas called Pírána Beer.

With clumps and bushes on the plain,
Of crops it was quite bare :
Occasional gazelles were found
To sport and frolic there.

These sportsmen all prepared their guns :
Two rifles had as well,
On the off chance they might with luck
Get shots at a gazelle.

4. Village.

Their main idea was the pot,
And small birds were their aim :
Beef and plum pudding absent were,—
They must put up with game.

To beat the bushes as he walked
Each sportsman did not fail,
And picked up, as he went, a hare,
A partridge or a quail.

And as they all were decent shots
The bag began to grow.
Hare soup and jugged, boiled quail and so,
Good for the pot, you know.

A sudden shout. Stopped short the line,
And N began to cry :
“Come here, you fellows : come to me
And see the reason why.”

All bustled up to where N stood :
He pointed to a tree,
A panther from a bush had sprung,
And grinning there sat he.

This was a quite unusual,
A novel kind of sport,

That wild beasts of a feline race
Themselves should there disport.

So they determined once for all
That this would never do,
Lest people in the neighbourhood
The consequence might rue.

They vowed they would not leave behind
That panther in the tree,
And that the beast, to stop his jinks,
Slaughtered at once must be.

From C they borrowed bullets all
And well-greased patches, too,
And crammed them down into their guns :
'Twas all that they could do.

Then C and R both stood on guard,
Whilst P and N both shot ;
The panther still but grinned a bit,
Although 'twas pretty hot.

Then P and N both stood on guard
Whilst R and C both fired :
The panther, finding this too much,
Now gracefully retired.

He clambered down the tree and fled
As fast as he could go :
Bullets pursued him as he went,
But not one hit, you know.

He went and hid himself behind
A bush not far away,
And, thinking all was well so far,
Beneath it skulking lay.

The sportsmen cautiously came on
With loaded guns again,
And peered about both high and low
Around the rolling plain.

And soon beneath a spreading bush
They saw the creature lie,
And R determined to his shot
The wretched beast must die.

Here must we pause a funny tale,
Ere 'tis too late, to tell,
Also what kind of gun he had,
And what there then befell.

He had a gun whose barrels both
With trigger one were fired,

The right one first, and to the left
The trigger then retired.

He ran before his friends and shot
The panther through and through.
Die without fight ! Oh no, the beast
This clearly would not do.

And so he charged, but soon fell down,
As he was wounded sore,
And it was evident the game
For him was well nigh o'er.

R. rather lost his head at this,
And acted in a hurry :
With his right barrel cocked again,
He gave way to a flurry.

To let the panther claw his back
He thought would be no fun,
And thinking he'd no barrel left,
Opined 'twas time to run.

And so he did. The wounded beast
One further effort made,
But he was done, and so himself
Upon the ground he laid.

R. with the other barrel saw
How he'd been led astray,
And smashed the helpless panther's head
As on the field he lay.

Beware, all sportsman, to be cool,
And never in a hurry,
Lest you forget a patent trick
And wind up in a flurry.

LAY OF THE FANCIED VIOLET.

As, fowling-piece in hand, I strayed,
To while away the time,
And thought of happy days I'd spent
In England's genial clime.

A little flower on my path
Glistened with morning dew ;
I thought it was a violet,
And of the purest blue.

I plucked it, and it had indeed
The violet's sweet smell :
But there was something in its shape—
That trifle broke the spell.

I looked above, and o'er my head
A palm waved in the wind :
I looked around and near me stood
The swarthy sons of Ind.

I looked below and found a stem
So green and coarse and rank,
That grew among the noisome weeds
Of a foul Indian tank.

So may I test earth's joys, and choose
Joys that may ne'er decay ;
So, hopeful, look for future life,
Ere this life fades away.

THE LAY OF THE TIGER.

SOME love to ride on steeds of pride,
The foaming boar to spear,
Whilst others prove the rifle's groove
Upon the timid deer.
To each his meed, but you and I,
Let's polish up the gun,
That gun with which o'er nobler beasts
Our victories are won.

With a health to all who hear the call
Of "Marked him down," and dare
To beard the ruthless tiger
At noonday in his lair.

On foot or in the howdah,
Wheree'r we take our stand,
With cold grey eye unflinching,
And sunburnt, steady hand,
We'll track the prowling panther,
The lion to his den,
And follow grizzly Bruin up
O'er rock and hill and glen.
With a health to all who hear the call
Of "Marked him down," and dare
To beard the ruthless tiger
At noonday in his lair.

We envy not that man his wealth
Who, centred all in self,
Dreams but of speculation
And all whose hopes are pelf :
But give to us our comrades,
Whose hearts are true and large,
Who grudge nought unto each other but
The danger of a charge.

With a health to all who hear the call
Of "Marked him down," and dare
To beard the ruthless tiger
At noonday in his lair.

We'll hope in merry England
When age is creeping on,
To fight again with those old friends
The battles we have won ;
And tell our children round us
How, standing side by side,
We laid some monster tiger low,
How pluckily he died !
With a health to all who hear the call
Of "Marked him down," and dare
To beard the ruthless tiger
At noonday in his lair.

THE CHIEF'S HOUR OF DOUBT.

At Magdala a message came
From Abyssinia's lord :
The fate of all the captives hung,
Trembling, on Napier's word.
Should it be "no," in savage hands
Their future who could tell ?

Should it be "yes," 'twas liberty !
O Chieftain, ponder well !
Bitter and sad our good Chief's thoughts
In that long hour of doubt :
Earnest the heart-felt prayer with which
He thought his duty out.
Then, not without a manly tear
That glistened on his cheek,
To those two messengers their doom
Must Robert Napier speak.
"Old England's honour must be saved,
And those who tell our story
Must write : ' Though dear the captives' lives,
Far more the Nation's glory.' "
"Go ! say to Theodore, the king :
The captives must be free ;—
Without conditions, too, himself
Surrender unto me.
His spiteful malice should he wreak
To do one captive harm,
Full soon the vengeance shall he feel
Of England's mighty arm.
Should ill befall you, whom I send
In sorrow back again,
Prideaux and Flad, the world shall know,
Their duty did as men."
And so they went, but in the while

The tyrant's fears prevailed,
And we in camp the captives free
Among us gladly hailed.
Then round an ensign-covered drum
The voice of prayer we raised,
And from our good Chief's heart welled up
The cry : " Now God be praised ! "

THE LEGEND OF BROACH.

THERE was a city in the East ;
Its name is Broach : it was, at least,
Ere monomaniacs, purists, who
At changing names make no ado,
Provided they can show their learning
And prove their modest pay they're earning,
Called it Bharúch, a sound too utter
For ordinary lips to utter.
So, spite of antiquarian lore,
We'll call it Broach, as heretofore.
Some purists, though, are most provoking :
One almost thinks they must be joking,
Or fun at men unlearnéd poking,
When Soorut they must call Surat,

And Meerut they will call Mirat,
And horrify all saints to come,
By changing to Damdam, Dumdum.

But now, no longer time to waste,
We'll leave each critic to his taste,
Premising we are quite contented
With the old names our sires invented.

It chanced at Broach in ancient time,
I cannot put his name to rhyme,

There lived one Bhagú : for his style I wish ye
Could find a synonym : he was a *Rishi*.

So long a time has passed that, pos !
I scarce can tell you what he was.

Great things he could do of his own spontaneity,
And the populace worshipped him half as a deity,
But he ate like a mortal and drank just as well,
So we may as well call him a deified swell.

In his hand he would take up a venomous snake,
And twine it around on his arm or his neck,

Whilst *cobra capellas*,
Such nice, slimy fell(a)ows,

Would grovel or rise at his beck.
With hissing and spite

They'd dart forward and bite,
And blood would flow free from his arm,

But he first had the tact
Their fangs to extract,

To keep them from doing him harm.

From a pot with nought in it,

He'd produce in a minute

A mango, you watched as it grew,

Whilst for those who would ask it

He'd shut up in a basket

A boy whom he'd pierce through and through,

Whilst a few seconds after,

With shouts and with laughter,

The boy would run in safe and well :

He was in, you'd no doubt ;

How the deuce he got out,

Was more than a fellow could tell.

Enough ! People adored him,

And oftentimes bored him,

For their own or their enemies' good :

If fix it he couldn't,

He'd say that he wouldn't,

Or rather, be blessed if he would.

Down from Central India's fountains,

Down from Vindhya's hoary mountains,

Swift through plain, and gorge, and wood,

Flows Nerbudda's mighty flood,

Where, encamped of old, they say,

Great Alexander's army lay

Underneath a single tree.

Once I went from Broach to see ;

No one showed it there to me :

Each branch had now become a mother,
And thrown down roots whence sprang another :

I returned, you cannot wonder,
With a face as black as thunder ;

If you would like to see it, Sir,
Sail up and see the *Kabir Burr*¹

The river's course then lay, they say, Sir,
Six miles from Broach below Anklesar,

A thriving town one dimly sees,
Looming amidst its toddy trees.

There a winding bank they show,
Where Nerbuddah erst did flow.

Indian rivers play such freaks,
Turning ditches into creeks,

Turning land to mud again,
Swallowing up a fertile plain,

So that one can ne'er retrieve it :
I for one can quite believe it.

As in earth's ev'ry other quarter,
The Broachites often wanted water,

And as, by Eastern custom led,
They carried it upon the head,

Six miles to go ere they could reach it,
They found it troublesome to fetch it.

1. A supposed large Banian tree, in an island in the Nerbudda, really a grove of trees, perhaps originally sprung from a single tree.

Unseemly sights were often seen,
For Deeva's pub. lay just between,
Where maids, to freshen mind and body,
Stepped in to take a drop of *toddy*.²
To poise a pitcher on the head
Gives women grace, it may be said,
But then the gait should steady be
And step from oscillation free.
Now Broach's maids from drinking toddy,
Were not always quite firm of body,
So as to deftly bear their weight,
And carry home their pitchers straight.
And so it sometimes came to pass,
That they got home, but then alas !
The pitchers they had gone to fill,
Were on the road so prone to spill,
They ended in a fluid *nil*.
The ancient Broachites tell a tale,
Of an old laundress, who was male !
A washerwoman male, you'll say,
Is not a thing seen every day.
Oh no ! you're very wrong. At least,
You'd be so in the gorgeous East,
Where they adopt the inverted plan,
And ev'ry washerwoman is a man !

2. The fermented juice of a kind of palm.

This artisan is called a Dhoby ;
At washing, ironing a robe, he
With utmost skill
Will work his will,
And turn it out with band and frill,
Starched to the *nth* to such erection
A laundress well might say : "Perfection !"
This laundry-man, in dragging clothes
Out to Anklesar, vented oaths
And epithets that laid the lash on
The female sex in Eastern fashion,
Words seeming harmless, full of spite,
Not understandable by ears polite.
This Dhoby in a tearing rage
Came to the presence of the sage,
Swearing his clothes had all been soiled,
And his week's washing had been spoiled
In trudging through the sandy loam
Between Anklesar and his home.
If he, a sage and demi-god,
Who could do most things with a nod,
Would put together two and two,
His people's woes would keep in view
And set them right, why, well and good !
If not, they'd get on as they could,
But for the sage 'twould not be pleasant :
He should not have a single present,

No offerings of rice and *ghee*,
No jewels, things of filigree,
No dresses, robes of rich *kincob*.³
No cash to jingle in his fob.

In fact, to act were he not willing,
He'd cut him off without a shilling.

The sage reflected. 'Twas not pleasant
To lose the Dhoby's daily present.

His wardrobe, too, was rather scanty.
He thought, if clean things he should want, he

Would rather send them to the wash,
Where he would need no ready cash,
And get them home so clean and nice,
Without their costing him a *pice*.⁴

"My faithful washerman," then said he ;
"To grant your prayers I'm always ready.

When next you come from washing, mind
You drag along the clothes behind.

No looking back, for, if you do,
The consequences you may rue :

But walk straight on and you shall see
How old Nerbudda worships me."

The Dhoby took him at his word,
And then the strangest thing occurred.

3. A rich cloth of gold thread.

4. A small Indian coin.

The waters careered,
And the waves their heads reared,
As they followed the Dhoby behind,—
The shell-fish coquetted,
The eels pirouetted,
Each with his several kind.

The Dhoby walked, the Dhoby talked,
And chatted to his fill,
And whilst he so smiling the way was beguiling,
The river followed still.

Arrived at home, no more to roam,
He turned him back to view,
And there he saw for evermore
The river following too.

This is the legend, this the story,
Handed down from ages hoary,
How the *Rishi's* godlike force
Turned aside Nerbudda's course.

Thus the tale of ancient sage
Now adorns my humble page,
And immortalised in rhyme,
Liveth on to ev'ry time.

THE LAY OF DELHI.

I WOULD tell a deed of daring, of duty noble done,
Of how the town of Dehli by British arms was won.
They may talk of ancient heroes, and of those of
noble name :

Not less should British soldiers adorn the roll of
fame.

For months beleagured Delhi showed an uncon-
quered front

Whilst on the Ridge our army of battle bore the
brunt,

Beset by rain and tempest and not less dire disease,
Harassed by foes in front and rear, and never left
at ease.

Nobly the little army still held the foe at bay,
Awaiting reinforcements they knew were on their
way.

These came and soon the siege-guns, with deadly
shell and ball,

Rained, as if hell's mouth opened, on Delhi's trem-
bling wall.

Straining, as dogs held in the leash, at sight of
hoped-for prey,
Before the dawn all under arms hailed the eventful
day.
'Twas then the little party, whose story I relate,
Moved, silent, swiftly to the front towards the
Kashmír gate.

Here let us pause, those heroes' names that all the
world may know,
And watch them as to duty in face of death they go.
Brave Howe and Salkeld led them on ; behind
them sergeants four,
Burgess, Carmichael, Hawthorn, Smith, four bags
of powder bore.

The foe rained bullets. 'Spite of these the powder
bags were laid :
Essay to light the port fire then the gallant Salkeld
made,
But shot through arm and leg, he fell—the fuse
slipped from his hand—
Yet, falling, he to light the fuse to Burgess gave
command.

Then Burgess, as a soldier should, to do his duty
tried,
But as a fatal bullet sped, he for his country died.

Carmichael then the portfire seized and set the fuse
on fire,
And, wounded mortally, fell back. His praise
could not be higher.

Smith forward leapt to take his place, but saw the
fuse aglow,
And jumped in time to save his life, into the ditch
below
A moment more—as lightning bright, the ignited
powder flashed,
And with a sudden hideous roar the gate together
crashed.

Howe then to Hawthorn gave the word to sound
his bugle horn,
And Britons, fanned by victory's wing, into the
breach were borne.
To these men of heroic deed vain Fortune was not
kind,
For of the six who risked their lives but two were
left behind.

Howe, Salkeld and Carmichael and Burgess lived
not long :
Hawthorn and Smith alone remained to grace the
poet's song.

To those whose hearts beat truly to say more there's
no need :

His heart whom such deeds fire not must be of
stone indeed.

THE HAPPY KUNBIS.

“ LUXMI, my life, why sit'st thou here
Like one distraught with grief,
And checkest not the silent tear,
That gives thee no relief ?
The sugar cane has sprouted up—
The *bájri*'s well in ear—
Plenty doth surely fill our cup,
Of debt we have no fear.
The bread was toasted to a turn,
And sweet and fresh the *ghi*,
Without a symptom of a burn
Was boiled the *Khicheree*.
Well cooked my dinner : thus I had
No single fault to find.
What is it, then, that makes thee sad ?
What weighs upon my mind ? ”
“ Oh Parbhudass, my lord most dear,
'Tis sweet to hear thy praise,

But still must flow the silent tear
And sighs my bosom raise.
I know the fields are looking well,
And in full milk the cows :
Of healthy bullocks we can tell,
To yoke in goodly ploughs.
'Twere very shame had I forgot,
When I made *khicheree*
To stir up well the cooking-pot,
Or use unwholesome *ghi*.
For duty done I need no praise,
But need forgiveness more,
For I forgot for three whole days
To coddung fresh the floor."

THE REQUIEM OF THE YEAR.

A STATELY ship sailed onwards
Towards its destined strand,
Whilst from our view sank downwards
The distant sunlit land.
The twilight ever dimmer,
Passed slowly to the West ;
Each by its tiny glimmer,
Stars twinkling stood confessed.

Her path the good ship cleaving
Left not a trace to find,
Save sparks on ocean heaving,
Left in the wake behind.

No more in time abiding,
Down to eternity
The waning year was gliding,
And with the year passed we.
Still all around and o'er us
The stars more brightly shone,
And from the deep before us
Forth flashed the orient moon.
The tiny wavelets glistened,
And sang into my ear,
Gently, as still I listened,
The requiem of the year.

The past with all its sorrow
Has faded from our view :
Look, hopeful, to the morrow,
A fresher life and new.
Those little sparks that shining
Pass in the wake away,
Warn us 'gainst vain repining
For joys that fled as they.

Bright as the moon is throwing
Its fair light on our road,
Hope in thy heart still glowing,
Thy future trust to God.

FRESH TO FRESH AND NEW TO NEW.

Translated from the Persian.

O MINSTREL sweet, renew thy song ;
With fresher notes thy strains prolong.
Bring hither now heart-opening wine,
And with new melody combine.
Well pleased, retire with me awhile,
And with thy harp an hour beguile,
Snatch then a kiss to thy delight,
Ever be fresh and ever bright ;
Then only life's fruit shalt thou gain
When thou the ruby bowl shalt drain.
O silver-limbed cupbearer, thou
To the fair grove art coming now :
Quick let me, then, the goblet fill
With wine still new and fresher still.
For thou, sweet charmer of my heart,
Dost to my longing soul impart
Colour and form of beauty, too,

Aye fresh to fresh and new to new.
Should'st, morning breeze, thou e'er repair
To where there dwells that *Pari* fair,
When Háfiz' story thou dost tell,
In new fresh accents on it dwell !

THE LAY OF RUINED BOMBAY.

ALL bubble banks must burst in foam,
The Treasury run dry
Before this City shall resume
Its old prosperity.
I saw a vision in my sleep,
That gave my spirit strength to sweep
Circle and Rampart Row :¹
I saw a speculator stand,
The last of all that noble band
That made the money go.

The market had a sickly air,
Promoters none were seen,
The Mercantile Bank steps were bare
Of brokers erst so keen.
Some men had gone to foreign lands,
And left their dupes with scrip in hands

1. Two business centres in Bombay.

Now wrung in hopeless woe.
As "Poles," as "servants" some had fled :
As "Gentlemen" had others sped
On board the P. and O.²

Yet martyr-like that lone one stood
With well-filled purse and stout :
It would have done your feelings good
To hear his words gush out.
Oh we are jolly dogs, are we,
Buoyant in our insolvency
Now *that* old Anstey's gone,
For he this dreary time last year
Kept us in trepidating fear
That he would pity none !

What though shareholders now squeak forth
Their small complaining note,
And Government put Cleveland up
Unpleasant Acts to quote.
Yet care we not one button for
Their threats of prosecution, or
Their paltry little fines :
Nor is our sleep one whit less sound
Though widows to the dust are ground,
Nor heed we orphans' whines.

2. The Peninsula and Oriental Steamship Company.

Oblivion's pall now kindly throw
O'er speculation's day,
For child-like men will better know
With edged tools than to play.
Those weird Financials bring not back
That kept men's minds upon the rack
Of hope their shares to sell.
How from shareholders' treasure chests
Were feathered their Directors' nests
The public know full well.

E'en I am weary of the fun
Of seeing others fail,
Whilst seedy bankrupts cut and run
And victims wan turn pale,
My lips that speak this farewell song,
Its wholesome truths and moral strong,
Must now in pity close ;
Uniting in our common crash,
Financials, Reclamations, smash,
And mortals need repose.

This child of pleasure sips the cup,
To England he'll return :
Oh never think you'll shut him up,
Or make his fingers burn.
No ! he shall live at home and shine

In Fashion's circles, realms divine,
Where money reigns supreme :
Where wealth can lift the snob on high,
The cynosure of every eye,
And titled flunkies' theme.

Go, then, while brass shall give me grace
In this sad, ruined town
To wear a calm and smiling face,
While all around me frown.
Go, tell the Judges of the court
To cut their cutting speeches short,
For cheating never thrives,
And we the learned Bench defy
To touch our well earned property,
'Tis settled on our wives !

THE LAY OF THE AIDE DE CAMP.

FYTTE THE FIRST.

HAVE you heard of E. S. Jervis,
Jervis, the rapacious beast,
How he ate his Chieftain's pickles
In the regions of the East ?

Ev'ry day the greedy creature
Leered from out his greedy eyes,
Leered at ham in tins, at bacon,
Jellies, jams and rich game pies.

Riled I ween, was William Mansfield
Such unseemly things to hear,
For he'd lost his choicest liquor,
Hock, champagne and bitter beer.

"Listen now, sagacious Longden,
Whom the colonels all obey,
Is it not my bounden duty
Straight to send this Aide away ?"

Then sagacious Longden answered :
"You're the Chief Commander : less
Than a trial by Court-martial
Will not do for you, I guess.

First of all a confidential,
Home-enquiry like, you know,
Would make things look so much nicer
Ere the hog entire you go."

Straightway went the Simla Chieftain,
For his Order-book called he,

And a Court of First Enquiry,
Officers assembled three,

Then the three in secret meeting
Jervis scoundrel did pronounce,
Contumacious, Court not fearing,
Whom the Chief should surely trounce.

When Sir William wrote Court-Martial,
Somewhat fidgetty grew he :
Cried at last, his household backing,
“ Neck or nothing it must be.

Shew the world I stand devoted,
Victim to unpleasant task :
Should not I, who order others,
Sacrifice myself, I ask ? ”

As he spoke, a nasty Taylor
In his face a summons flung,
“ Damages, a lac for libel,”
Words of omen ill were sung.

For a suit of huge diversions
In a Civil Court sprang up,
Swallowing those small proceedings
As a tiger would a pup.

“Tarnal death ! This is a sell now !”
Terrified, the household cried,
But unmoved, the Chieftain straightway
Close arrest on Jervis tried.

“That’s your game,” said Jervis : angry
Words of scorning from him burst,
“No ! My sword I’ll not surrender ;
See you all much further first.”

Sudden from the neighb’ring stations
Officers in troops ascend,
At whose Court must Jervis fuming,
Nolens, volens, still attend.

Calm and stately were they seated,
Brind, impartial, at their head.
Under Taylor’s artful guidance
Cross-examination sped.

Like a moist, unpleasant serpent,
Closer still the coils he drew,
Till at last the Chief, first witness,
Writhing, most unhappy grew.

In Bombay his old acquaintance
Sniggered at Sir William’s woe :

“ Did he not sell beer and mutton
Here not very long ago ? ”

FYTTE THE SECOND.

Sick at heart, still William Mansfield
Broods upon his grievous wrong.
Wh’lst the slow and staid Court-Martial
Draws its dreary length along.

Always peering at the papers,
Seeing what the public say
When a Chief his household linen
Washes in the face of day.

Not in vain, for ev’ry journal
Calmly tells him what it thinks,
While the shocked and sneering army
Still the luscious scandal drinks.

Still the calm and staid Court-Martial
But at tiffin took no rest,
Ever solving legal puzzles
As to honest heads seemed best.

Only after ev’ry sitting,
When the dreary day was o’er,

Some there were who, too impatient,
Voted it a horrid bore.

Still the Court-instructing Chieftain
Must his home-made orders quote,
Still in playful fancy clutching
E. S. Jervis by the throat.

But the Chief began to waver,
Soon his brow was overcast,
And the folks began to whisper :
“ Something in the wind at last.”

Soon the lookers-on were puzzled
How to hold their laughing jaws :
Sundry titters soon expanded
Into unpolite guffaws.

For a fact of some importance
Slipped Sir William unaware,
That when Jervis gave his picnics
He himself was often there.

’Midst a pause of awful portent
Smiled the Court to see the play,
For the Chieftain glared at Taylor
In a most unpleasant way.

Then he writhed as if in torture,
Answered questions "Yes" or "No,"
For 'twas clear the farce of justice
Could but little further go.

Soon Sir William lost his temper
And his looks grew very blue,
And 'twas evident the trial
He began to sorely rue.

Till at last his weary answers
Vaguer grew and yet more queer.
"Why did he retail my mutton?
"How dared he to sell my beer?"

FYTTE THE THIRD.

When the Court had given sentence
Calm the Chieftain read it through,
Nor, like any common mortal,
Into any passion flew.

Calm he nibbed the trusty goose-quill,
That he held within his grasp,
Looked as calm as any blacksmith,
Filing iron with a rasp.

“ Mercy ! Yes, I’d mercy shew him,
 Could I think my duty done ! ”
Then Sir William finished Jervis,
 Calm as when he’d first begun.

Though he’d paid for jams and pickles,
 And his word was good as cash,
Yet his insubordination,
 Fatal, settled Jervis’ hash.

THE LAY OF THE SISTER.

OH ! sister dear, what hidden woe
Betrays thy lustrous eye ?
Hath mortal malice dealt the blow
At which thy tears unbidden flow,
Thy bosom heaves the sigh ?

Or hath some God in anger dread
Thy punishment decreed,
And poured on thy devoted head
Vials of wrath as molten lead
For secret, sinful dead ?

“No, sister mine. No mortal hand
Hath been outstretched on me,
Nor hath a god in fury grand
Of conscience lit the awful brand
For sin done secretly.”

“Luxmee, alas ! a fearful pang
Across thy visage shoots ;
Thy hair in handfuls large doth hang,
Snapping with more than bowstring’s pang
Thou tear’st out by the roots !”

“In pity weep, my sister dear ;
My secret grief I tell—
When last dear mother brushed my hair,—
You know her eyesight is not clear :
She did not do it well !”



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

PR Ré -
5209 New lays of Ind.
R2196n

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 367 840 6

PR
5209
R2196n

